

TIPS FOR SAVING MONEY ON YOUR UTILITY BILLS

Lower the thermostat in the winter: According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, you can save about 3% on heating costs for every degree you lower your thermostat. More than half of all New Hampshire households use fuel oil to heat their homes. At the current price of heating oil—\$4.535 per gallon in New Hampshire—consumers may pay as much as \$3,628 in heating costs next winter. Lowering the thermostat one degree would save \$108 in costs; lowering the thermostat ten degrees would save \$1088.

Maintain your home: A combination of proper insulation and sealing—including caulking and weather stripping around drafty doors, windows, and other gaps—can lower your home heating costs by up to 30%. This translates to over \$1,000 at current costs in NH homes heated by fuel oil. Be sure to replace the filters in your furnace every three months—a dirty filter makes the furnace work harder and require more fuel.

Look for the star: If you have to replace any appliances in your home, consider purchasing a more efficient Energy Star product. Energy Star is a joint effort led by the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency to identify and promote energy-efficient products and appliances. These products use less energy, protecting the environment and lowering your utility bills. For instance, refrigerators that have qualified for the Energy Star use at least 20% less energy than current federal standards and 40% less energy than the average model sold in 2001. If you bought a 20 cubic foot refrigerator in 1990, it currently costs you \$225 each year to run. If you replace it with a similar Energy Star-qualified refrigerator, you can save more than \$760 over five years—your Energy Star refrigerator will only cost you \$73 per year to run! Information on specific products that have earned the Energy Star can be found at www.energystar.gov.

Change your light bulbs: Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) cost a little more to purchase, but use 75% less energy and last 10 times as long as regular incandescent bulbs. Over the course of a CFL's lifetime, Energy Star estimates that you may save as much as \$30 in cumulative electric costs per bulb. Special CFLs have even been manufactured to work with dimmer lights and three-way switches.

Unplug your appliances: Many appliances, including small devices like cell phone chargers, continue using small amounts of electricity when they are plugged in but not in use. Estimates indicate that as much as 5% of residential power usage is a result of "standby power." Based on an average monthly electric bill of \$91.50, unplugging appliances when not in use may save you as much as \$55 each year.

Turn off the lights: As you move around your home, turn off your lights and other electric devices as you go—if you aren't in the room, there is no reason to leave the light on. The same principle can be applied to other utilities as well. Make sure to turn your faucets all the way off to minimize water lost due to dripping. Turn the water off while you are brushing your teeth or shaving. Establishing good utility habits will save money and energy in the long run.